

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 08038 181448Z

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INFO AMCONSUL KARACHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 8038

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, AEMR, ASEC, LE, PLOO

SUBJECT: EMBASSY SECURITY AND EVACUATION PLANNING

REF: (A) BEIRUT 8023, (B) STATE 252331

1. SUMMARY. AS A RESULT OF DISCUSSIONS WITH LEBANESE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF INTERNAL SECURITY AND FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE SECURITY SITUATION IN WEST BEIRUT, THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT FOUR ADDITIONAL MARINE SECURITY GUARDS BE ASSIGNED TO BEIRUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. END SUMMARY.

2. CHARGE, DATT AND RSO MET WITH HISHAM SHA'AR, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE GOL INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES OCT 17 TO DISCUSS SECURITY SITUATION IN WEST BEIRUT AND RELATIONS BETWEEN LAA AND SARKIS SECURITY FORCES. SHA'AR STRESSED, AS HE HAS IN EARLIER CONVERSATIONS, THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING A POWERFUL EXTERNAL SECURITY FORCE TO KEEP THE PEACE IN LEBANON AFTER A CEASE-FIRE IS ARRANGED. HE FAVORED AN ARAB LEAGUE FORCE FOR THIS ROLE, EXCEPT IN BEIRUT ITSELF, WHERE HE SAID FRENCH FORCES WOULD BE THE BEST. HE MENTIONED THAT IN SYRIAN-CONTROLLED AREAS OF LEBANON, SYRIAN FORCES HAD PERFORMED THIS ROLE VERY EFFECTIVELY. WITHOUT SUCH AN EXTERNAL FORCE, HE DID NOT SEE HOW THE VARIOUS ARMED GROUPS IN OTHER AREAS OF

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 08038 181448Z

LEBANON COULD BE BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL AND DISARMED.

3. IN DISCUSSION OF US EMBASSY SECURITY PROBLEM, SHA'AR SAID HE THOUGHT EMBASSY WAS IN A RELATIVELY SAFE AREA. HE SAID THERE IS AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN LOCAL MILITARY GROUPS, INCLUDING LAA AND ITTIHAD AL ISTIRAQI AL ARABI (ARAB SOCIALIST UNION) HEADED BY KEMAL YOUNIS, WHICH CONTROLS AREA IN WHICH CHANCERY IS LOCATED, THAT US EMBASSY WOULD NOT BE MOLESTED. HE OFFERED TO ARRANGE A MEETING BETWEEN EMBASSY OFFICIALS AND YOUNIS TO DISCUSS OUR SECURITY PROBLEM. WE BELIEVE SUCH CONTACT IS AN EXCELLENT IDEA AND PLAN TO WORK OUT SUCH MEETING BETWEEN YOUNIS AND RSO IF WE HAVE NOT HEARD FROM SHA'AR WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS.

4. WHEN ASKED WHAT STEPS HE WOULD TAKE IF HE WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR SECURITY OF US EMBASSY, SHA'AR SAID HE WOULD BRING IN MORE MARINES. HE SAID THAT SITUATION WAS UNCERTAIN AND MIGHT REMAIN SO FOR SOME TIME AND THAT IN EMERGENCY SITUATION IT WAS BETTER TO RELY ON ONE'S OWN NATIONALS, RATHER THAN LOCALLY-HIRED GUARD FORCES. HE WARNED THAT EMBASSY SHOULD NOT BECOME TOO DEPENDENT ON LOCALLY-HIRED BODYGUARDS OR LAA. HE INDICATED THAT OVERALL SECURITY IN WEST BEIRUT IS SUPERVISED BY PLO SECURITY DEPARTMENT, HEADED BY ABU IYAD, BUT HE RECOGNIZED THAT USG WOULD HAVE SOME PROBLEMS DEALING DIRECTLY WITH HIM AND THAT PLO MIGHT NOT BE SYMPATHETIC TO OUR CONCERNS IN VIEW OF OUR CLOSE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. SHA'AR INDICATED THERE WAS LITTLE LIAISON BETWEEN LAA AND HIS ORGANIZATION OR OTHER ELEMENTS RESPONSIVE TO SARKIS.

5. COMMENT: AFTER CAREFULLY CONSIDERING SHA'AR'S REMARKS AND REVIEWING PRESENT AND POSSIBLE FUTURE SECURITY NEEDS OF THIS EMBASSY, WE BELIEVE THAT AN ADDITIONAL FOUR MARINE SECURITY GUARDS SHOULD BE ASSIGNED TO THIS EMBASSY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

A. THE SITUATION IN WEST BEIRUT DURING THE NEXT MONTH OR TWO IS LIKELY TO BE EXTREMELY UNSETTLED. IF A CEASE-FIRE IS WORKED OUT AT THE SUMMIT CONFERENCE AT

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 08038 181448Z

RIYADH AND/OR CAIRO, IT MAY START LEBANON ON THE ROAD TO PEACE, BUT IT IS ALSO LIKELY TO BE REJECTED BY AT LEAST A FEW OF THE MANY ARMED GROUPS NOW ACTIVE IN WEST BEIRUT. THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS THAT AT LEAST SOME OF THESE GROUPS MAY RESORT TO TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. DOUBLING OF OUR MSG FORCE WOULD INCREASE OUR ABILITY TO COPE WITH THIS THREAT DURING THE UNCERTAIN PERIOD AHEAD.

B. AN MSG FORCE OF NINE RATHER THAN THE PRESENT FIVE WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE OUR ABILITY TO RESIST AN EXTERNAL ATTACK. IT WOULD ENABLE MSGS TO BE STATIONED AT A NUMBER OF KEY POINTS IN THE EMBASSY WHICH CANNOT NOW BE COVERED AND WOULD PROVIDE ONE OR TWO MORE MEN TO ASSIST, IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION, IN CONTROL OF LOCAL EMPLOYEES AND DESTRUCTION OF CLASSIFIED MATERIAL.

C. AT PRESENT EACH MSG STANDS A FOUR-HOUR WATCH BY HIMSELF. IF THERE WERE TWO WATCHSTANDERS, THE MSG COULD PERFORM A NUMBER OF TASKS, SUCH AS THE SHAKE-DOWN OF VISITORS, WHICH MUST NOW BE DONE BY LOCALLY-HIRED BODYGUARDS BECAUSE WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH MSGS.

D. AN MSG DETACHMENT OF NINE WOULD GIVE US MUCH MORE FLEXIBILITY. IF THE USG DECIDED TO SEND ON SHORT NOTICE A NEW AMBASSADOR OR SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE SUCH AS BROWN OR SEELYE, THE ADDITIONAL SECURITY REQUIRED WOULD BE IN PLACE AND FAMILIAR WITH THE LOCAL SCENE.

6. THE ASSIGNMENT OF AN ADDITIONAL FOUR MSGS SHOULD NOT ATTRACT UNDUE ATTENTION. AS INDICATED REFTTEL A, THE FRENCH ALREADY HAVE 15 FRENCH GUARDS AT THEIR COMPOUND. THE ADDITIONAL MSGS COULD BE HOUSED IN THE PRESENT MSG QUARTERS WITHOUT DIFFICULTY (THESE QUARTERS PREVIOUSLY ACCOMMODATED 12 MSGS).

7. RECOMMENDATION: THAT AN ADDITIONAL FOUR MSGS BE ASSIGNED TO EMBASSY BEIRUT WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS, I.E., BY NOV 1 IF POSSIBLE. RSO AND DATT CONCUR IN THIS RECOMMENDATION.

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PAGE 04 BEIRUT 08038 181448Z

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